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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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ART. I. — *Life and Correspondence of* THEODORE PARKER, *Minister of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, Boston.*  
By JOHN WEISS. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 2 vols.  
8vo. pp. xiv., 478; viii., 530.

MR. PARKER'S biographer enjoys the singular advantage of writing about his distinguished friend while the traits of his character and the incidents of his personal life are still vivid in the minds of his contemporaries, and while at the same time, owing to the swift passage of events, he is thrust back into the shadows of a past generation, as belonging to which he may be treated with all the unreserve which remoteness of time alone allows. Not four years have passed since Mr. Parker was laid in his Florentine grave: it seems fifty since he walked Boston streets. The boys and girls who knew him are scarcely young men and women, yet they belong to another epoch and to a new country. A complete edition of his writings has not been published; yet his greatest thoughts are already nearly, if not quite, absorbed by multitudes in great states, and are taking organic shape in political and social movements. His words of warning and prophecy are still ringing in our ears; but the warning has long ceased to be necessary, and the prophecy is far on its way towards historical fulfilment. Our hand is yet warm with the grasp he gave it, and yet it has for some time clasped eagerly the hands of men who were his foes. Our civil war has done the work of half a cen-

ture at least in the way of revolutionizing popular thought and sentiment. Many a one with whom he did battle with all his might would be fighting shoulder to shoulder with him were he alive to-day; and causes in whose behalf he did such manly and, it often seemed, such hopeless service, are now riding triumphantly into power, a long train of his bitterest enemies cheering them on.

Mr. Weiss has skilfully availed himself of both the advantages we have alluded to. He presents with careful minuteness every detail of Mr. Parker's personal life and character, and at the same time he throws them back into a perspective which softens their outline and sets them in the light of actual events. His cordial sympathy with his subject does not seem in the least obtrusive. Many will read the book with intense interest, who would not have looked at it three years ago; and many who, reading it three years ago, would have complained of the biographer's eager partisanship, will now wonder at the moderation with which he has executed his task. In a few instances he has indiscreetly printed personalities which could not have been avoided in a correspondence like Mr. Parker's, but which Mr. Parker never would have indulged in except in confidence with his intimate friends, and on special occasions which made them pertinent or necessary to his purpose. They were not meant for the public ear, and not for another time. The editor, we think, has done wisely in point of literary taste, kindly as regards the persons spoken of, and honorably towards Theodore Parker, in cancelling one or two passages, occupying in all some twenty lines, in the American edition. A delicate fastidiousness would perhaps have cancelled more, where the remarks are unimportant as throwing light on Mr. Parker's opinions or character, or where the compulsory substitute of a capital letter and a blank for a proper name deprives the criticism of all value by depriving it of all point. We read letters, especially such letters as Theodore Parker's, in order to get at the genuine opinions of the man who writes them; and passages in letters may about as well be withheld, as published with a reserve that leaves us in the dark in regard to those opinions.

But this is a trifling criticism, by the way. With all defects

of omission and commission, we have material enough for a full-length picture of Mr. Parker, drawn with the fidelity of a Millais. We have the man as he was, unveiled and unadorned. And a most remarkable man it is. A man remarkable, not as an exception to humanity, but as an expression of humanity; not for qualities which distinguished him from his fellows, but for qualities which identified him with his fellows; not as having gifts which others had not, but for having, in wonderful measure, gifts which all have. He was a man of his age; a man who summed up the tendencies and the genius of his generation, an American in every bone and muscle and nerve and drop of blood in his body. He was rooted deep in American soil, and drew sustenance from every element. His absorbing power was marvellous. How he drank up each drop of vital blood in his family connections! No quality in his fine ancestry remained unappropriated. His tap-root reached down a hundred years and more, and drew in fearlessness and great endurance and the love of *placidam quietem sub ense* from grandfather and great-grandfather. *Semper aude* was the motto of five generations of his progenitors, and the daring of all the five generations passed into him. From his father he imbibed the liking for metaphysics, psychology, mental and moral philosophy, geometry, and the mathematics, his passion for reading, his joviality and fun, his hatred of Paley and Jonathan Edwards, his independence of religious thought, his magnanimity, his care for the widow and the orphan, his Unitarianism, his suspicion of miracle, and even his administrative ability. He drew from his mother tenderness of conscience, moral earnestness, religious sentiment, charity, industry, and thrift. One of his rootlets searched out a kinsman who was famous for his knowledge of the Oriental tongues. The only one of the family whose disposition he altogether failed to assimilate seems to have been the solitary member who "joined the church." All the rest of the Parkers reappeared in him. Planted on Lexington Common, he absorbed the heroism of its bloody ground, and with it the whole genius of the Revolution as conceived by its most ardent and sanguine spirits. As he grew older, his roots extended farther, and laid wider fields under contribution. Trans-

planted to Boston, the West poured its hopeful energy into his views, and the secret forces that were at work in the heart of the continent, fashioning its peoples and its destinies, communicated to him their subtle influence in advance of history, and found expression in his thought and feeling, shaping his aspiration and animating his will. His powerful organism converted everything swiftly into blood,—men, women, facts, fancies, old books and parchments, dead languages and literatures, German metaphysics and criticism and theology, the ashes and crumbling stone of the Old World, the roughness and crudeness of the New. His immense organic vitality was always the striking thing about him. The strength of his physical constitution was prodigious. The lad could not only do the work of a day-laborer on the farm, beginning early, continuing long, plying strong and rapid strokes, and do night-work beside with his brain, but, as he says, “While working skilfully with my hands, I could yet think on what I would.”

At the Divinity School he toils at his books fourteen hours a day, without exercise, and while boarding himself, which means eating sawdust. As we sat in “young Tom Crawford’s” parlor, at the entrance of the Notch in the White Mountains, one evening in August, a dozen years ago and more, Mr. Parker came in from a tramp; he had walked that day to the top of Mount Washington and back, and seemed no more fatigued than we should have been after a walk of two miles. He went to his room, rubbed his legs, changed his dress, came down-stairs, chatted pleasantly the rest of the evening; and when we came down to an early breakfast the next morning, the landlord said he had been gone an hour or more on the road to Franconia. We have been told, and we believe it, that he walked on one occasion from New York to Boston, and composed a course of sermons on the road. The grasp of his hand was like the grip of a vice. Most intellectual men complain that railway travelling confuses, deadens, and exhausts the brain; but with him, “the railroad cars gave a pleasing and not harmful stimulus to thought, and helped him work out difficult problems of many kinds.” An invalid at Santa Cruz, doing the work of a scientific explorer, besides writing a book,

he yet speaks of himself as being in "a molluscos condition," never opening his mouth upon oyster or even shrimp without fearing he was committing the crime against nature by devouring his own kind. In London, an invalid, "too feeble to do much," he does such superfluous feats as visiting the Queen's stables, the bookstores, Billingsgate, the Tower, the Museum, the Reform Club, and many historical sites in the great city. In Switzerland, an invalid, he fells a large fir-tree with an axe, in half an hour, and is not injured by the effort; in fact, gains flesh under that kind of exercise. In Rome, still an invalid, he walks four, five, six, or even seven hours a day, without fatigue. About two months later, he visits nearly a dozen sites and ruins in a single day, and the day after that, though troubled with a cold, goes mousing about in churches and the Quirinal gardens. Three months before his death, he hopes to stand next winter well in Boston. "In all my illness, and it is now in its third year," he writes in London, "I have not had a single sad hour." A sure indication of great organic vitality.

This tide of natural force mantled up in his understanding. There was no end to his intellectual energy. We have no space to catalogue even his boyish achievements. Nine languages were studied in the Divinity School, among them Icelandic, Chaldaic, Arabic, Persian, Coptic, and Ethiopic. His knowledge of Hebrew and Syriac was so minute, that the Professor consulted him. Think of three hundred and twenty volumes, all solid and in various tongues, read in fourteen months! The young man, visiting Paris for the first time, attends lectures on Arabic, Corneille, Cicero, the philosophy of Gassendi and Descartes, the law of nature and nations, ancient history, Alexandrine mysticism, the unity of the human race, Italian literature, and vultures, and makes an analysis of every lecture. On moving to Boston as minister, not satisfied with the usual professional maxim, that one at a time is enough, he lays out sermon topics for four years in advance. In six winter months, not exceptional months either, he lectures eighty-four times, preaches at home a new sermon every Sunday, has six meetings a month at his own house, writes more than a thousand letters, "besides a variety of other work belonging

to a minister and a scholar." He goes to Rome a sick and doomed man, and in a few days has begun his work: — (1.) To study the geology of Rome; (2.) its flora and fauna; (3.) its archæology; (4.) its architecture. In Switzerland among the *savans* he indulges in pleasant mental excursions into the domain of meteorology and chemistry, the geologic formation of the Jura, habits of marine animals, and so forth; digressing agreeably now and then to pick up all that could be known from books, maps, statistics, newspapers, and soldiers' letters, about the Italian war then raging in Lombardy. In Rome his eyes are everywhere. He sees every new kind of nut or fruit in the stalls, and stops to learn what he can about it. Facts crowd to the magnet of his mind. "Feeble to-day, languid, can do nothing." No matter; the caravans come in just the same, and the porters push open his doors to bring in the goods, while the automatic powers catalogue them and store them away.

Were this all, it would be prodigious, but it is not half. The tendrils of his heart were as forthreaching and tenacious as the fibres of his brain. There was no satisfying his longing for love. At funerals he wept as heartily as the mourners. His carpet-bag, crammed with books, always had also a store of comfits for the uneasy children, and his closet had the nicest toys for the little people who climbed up to the top of his house to see "Mr. Parkie." He liked the little people whom he could fondle and kiss and hug. The boy school-teacher "was never without a poor girl or two who could not pay for her education"; and we may add, the man minister was never without a young man or two who had no means of going through college. He keeps a friend's "kind, sweet letter" two days before venturing to read it through. He "could not trust the emotional part in such affairs." "Do not speak of what you feel for me," he said to one whom he had known only by interchange of letters; "it makes me too unhappy to leave you." No man in America was the recipient of so many human sorrows and joys; no man rejoiced so much in the wealth of his sympathies, or suffered so much from stings inflicted on his heart. On the eve of his departure for the West Indies he dropped his little pencil-notes like tears among

his acquaintances; and more than one of them fell tenderly on men who had been counted among his foes.

No one doubts now the vitality of Mr. Parker's conscience, the depth of his moral conviction, or the tenacity of his grasp on the elemental instincts of justice and the primitive rock of truth. Here he seemed absolutely inseparable from the Eternal, a piece of primeval humanity. Every instance of heroism appeared familiar to him. The State Trials of England and the Bollandist Collection of Lives of the Saints were alike tributary to his moral sense. The power which held his childish arm when he would strike a spotted turtle by a pool, held his arm till the end, with an impalpable, but irresistible grasp. His passion for duty was as exhaustive as his hunger for knowledge or his thirst for love. Instead of saying, as most men do in their impatience of the demands of charity, "Have I not a right to do what I will with my own?" he was always ready to say, "Nothing is my own: all that I have and can do and am — my pleasure, my power, and my will itself — belong to truth and justice and humanity; the moral law owns me and my possessions"; and he held his life in his hand, ready to lay it at any moment on the altar of obedience. He could sacrifice anything to a conviction, and he could welcome the conviction that demanded the sacrifice. We recall no chapters in biography more impressive and touching than those which, in this memoir, tell of his devotion to the Antislavery cause. A scholar of the style that learned Europe would have rejoiced in, a scholar of the grand order, a man passionately fond of books and the study of books, zealously devoted to the accumulation of knowledge by patient research, fond of abstract philosophical speculation and of the quiet which is most congenial with it, entertaining vast intellectual schemes whose scope embraced nothing less than a history of the religious development of the foremost races of the earth, feeling that he, as a thinker, was called to lay broad and solid the historical foundation of the structure of pure Theism, as the religion of the most advanced nations of the globe for the next thousand years; he laid these immense and absorbing projects all by, or thrust them away into the fast diminishing moments of leisure, and postponed indefinitely the dearest hope and purpose of his



life, as well as his dearest personal tastes, in order that he might do the duty of the hour, as he understood it, to his country. The very opposite of Goethe, who thought it more patriotic to give his country an undying literature than to give it a transient political liberty, Parker thought it more patriotic, nay, more human, to free a slave than to write a theology. It was no desire for money or fame or popularity that sent him off, winter after winter, on those frightful lecturing tours through the Northern States; it was a profound sense of the importance of educating the people in the principles of liberty, with a view to the impending struggle which he clearly foresaw, and on which, as he believed, the future civilization of the country depended. For this he came down to the level of the stump-speaker; for this he became an occupant of platforms in small country towns; for this he became politician and member of vigilance committees; for this he shortened his life probably by a score or more of years. "We must respect the law of God," he cries. "What is a fine of a thousand dollars, and jailing for six months, to the liberty of a man? My money perish with me, if it stand between me and the eternal law of God." "The Fugitive Slave Law has cost me some months of time already. I have refused about sixty invitations to lecture, and delayed the printing of my book — for that!" In those few terrible years from 1850 to 1858, he sacredly devoted his whole being to the cause of his country and universal liberty.

All this, it may be urged, was done under the ardent impulse of a passionate temper fiercely stimulated by the general and prodigious excitement of the day. Too many elements came in to allow us to recognize the action of pure conscience bent on doing its simple duty, with no desire but for the praise of God. What, then, shall we say of the conscientiousness that he put into his literary work, and into departments of it where few would discover it, where very few indeed would appreciate it, and where none, perhaps, would chide the omission of it? Turn to page 402 of the first volume, and see with what painful fidelity he translated and edited DeWette's "Introduction to the Old Testament." "It cost me \$2,000 to stereotype it; I have received about \$775 back again. So, adding my interest to my

principal, — and that to my outlay for books on that specialty, — it makes a pretty little sum, not to speak of my toil. But if I were to live my life over again, I would do the same.” To the same friend he writes, “I took Eichhorn’s ‘Introduction to the New Testament,’ and prayed (kneeling) that I might not be led astray by one whom some called an infidel, while I sought after truth.” To another he writes, “I aim to find out all the new truth I can, not known to anybody. Then, to take all I can get from each sect, party, or class of men, and put all together, the new and the old, and set it before men.” In reviewing a book he avoided prejudice, not in Sidney Smith’s fashion, by declining to read the book, but by carefully reading all the literature out of which the book grew. See, for instance, his articles on Mr. Prescott’s Histories, in the “Massachusetts Quarterly,” March and September, 1849. When it became apparent, long before it became apparent to most, that the career of Daniel Webster was ended, and that he must die, Mr. Parker, anticipating the necessity of drawing a public lesson from his life, made a thorough review of his whole political course, from end to end, carefully read every one of his speeches, searchingly scrutinized and analyzed every one of his important votes, dropped his plummet as deep as he could into the motives and purposes of the man, gathered up the threads of passion and principle in him, and to the best of his ability cleared from the lenses of his own mind the dust of preconceived opinion and the film spread over them by his tears. On the decease of Mr. Webster, he took this burden of memories with him into the country, set them out in the sunshine, aired them in the breath of the hills, let the truth and sweetness of nature pass into his own spirit; then, returning to town, shut himself up in his room and wrote his memorial sermon. Many said it was hasty and reckless, and expressed the heated feeling of the hour. He had done his utmost to make it the judgment of posterity and of the truth.

Wonderful as Mr. Parker’s understanding and heart were, we incline to think that his moral sense was more wonderful still. “I have invested for various persons some hundred or hundred and fifty thousand dollars in my life. I never invested one dollar without consulting at least two judicious men, so as

to know what the facts were." There was in him an excess of the moral sentiment above the spiritual, that gave an ethical character to all his instruction on the highest themes, and indeed to his whole being. His religious feeling was natural affectionateness and dutifulness carried up to the Supreme; it was his lovingness and obedience overflowing the sphere of ordinary duty, and pouring out in gratitude, joy, hope, and aspiration through the fields of the Infinite. Hence it had the tenderness of the child and the truth of the prophet; but it lacked adoration, awe, mystery, — it had no twilight, no stormy midnight skies. It was poetic and heroic, but not mystical or saintly. The instrument with which he swept the heavens was always firmly planted on the ground, nor did he leave it for a moment to explore the heavenly place on wings of the spirit.

"I saw the need of Piety," he said, "religious feeling toward the Divine, — that instinctive, purely internal love of God, which I think is not dependent on conscience. I was led to this partly by my own disposition, which, I confess, naturally inclined me to spontaneous pious feeling — my only youthful luxury — more than to voluntary moral action; partly by my early culture, which had given me much experience of religious emotions; and partly, also, by my wide and familiar acquaintance with the mystical writers, — the *voluptuaries of the soul*, — who dwelt in the world of pious feeling, heedless of life's practical duties, and caring little for science, literature, justice, or the dear charities of common life. . . . . From these I not only learned much of the abnormal action of the human spirit, and saw how often mere fancy passes for fact, and a dreamer's subjective whim bestrides some great harbor of the world for a thousand years, obstructing the tall ships, till an earthquake throws it down, but I also gleaned up many a precious flower which bloomed unseen in those waste-places of literature."

The author of "The Religious Demands of the Age," in the Preface to the English edition of Mr. Parker's collected works, admits, though one of his warmest and most earnest disciples, that on the side of some of the deeper mysteries of experimental religion he said and wrote but little, and she refers to Mr. Newman's book, "The Soul," as supplying this deficiency in Parker's work. He held the grandest truths of religion in the interest of daily morality, and subsidized them in the cause of

ordinary justice and decency. "If to-morrow I perish utterly," he said, "then my fathers will be to me only as the ground out of which my bread-corn is grown. I shall care nothing for the generations of mankind. I shall know no higher law than passion. Morality will vanish." He often speaks to that effect, betraying the ethical character of his mind, and its tenacity in the soil of fact. In short, he was an intense realist, strong of bone and blood: his feet were planted fast on Plymouth Rock; his hands never loosed their grasp of facts; his understanding, his affections, his conscience, his faith, all blossomed from the soil like natural flowers, and had in them the juice of nature. His God was personal, definite, and human, — his father and mother raised to the power of infinity, — and he loved him in the concrete, in his earthly and human gifts, as a child loves its mother. His religion was simple naturalism; it was the organic vitality of his being passing as far as it could into the Infinite; it was an exhalation to the skies from the ground where he daily worked. His very prayers bloomed with wild fancies from the woods and fields, and were more fragrant with the smell of the new-mown hay and with the breath of the morning than with the odors of a purely spiritual sanctity. "I wish to stand on the earth, though I would look beyond the stars. I would live with men, but think with philosophers." "It yet remains for us to apply good sense to religion." He advises a young friend who was unhappy to become skilful in all housework, and noted for making good bread. "I should rather be eminent for bread and butter than famous for straddling about on platforms, and making a noise in public meetings, and getting into the papers, as many women do." He found the Christian Church no more divine than the British state, a Dutchman's shop, or an Austrian army. Facts only were divine; the concrete was the consecrated. It was this realism that gave him his powerful hold on men and women. This gave him his tremendous force in practical affairs. This breathed vitality into his discourses on the most abstruse questions, and gave a wholesome vigor to his discussions of metaphysical theology. His sermons on Theism and Atheism, Providence, and even on Communion with God, are full of the red blood of ordinary human nature.

"The fine arts," he says, "do not interest me so much as the coarse arts, which feed, clothe, house, and comfort a people. I should rather be such a great man as Franklin than a Michael Angelo; nay, if I had a son, I would rather see him a great mechanic who organized use, like the late George Stephenson, in England, than a great painter like Rubens, who only copied beauty. In short, I take more interest in a cattle-show than in a picture-show. Men talk to me about the 'Absence of Art' in America (you remember the stuff which has been twaddled forth on that theme, and what transcendental nonsense got delivered); I tell them we have cattle-shows, and mechanics' fairs, and ploughs and harrows and saw-mills, sowing-machines and reaping-machines, thrashing-machines, planing-machines, &c."

He regarded everything with the moral rather than with the æsthetic vision, and sought the palpable rather than the hidden truth. All this was very good for popular, practical, immediate human effect, but it was dearly purchased by the loss of the delicate spiritual apprehension and the nice feeling for works of pure imagination. It is to this defect, we think, more than to his controversial habits, that we must ascribe his singular blindness to the poetical beauty of the Old Testament myths, and the poor literalness with which he interpreted the grand symbolical creeds of Christendom. He dislikes Schiller heartily; finds fault with Emerson, that "he never appeals directly to the conscience, still less to the religious faculty in man"; "cannot believe in Swedenborg's interpretations of Scripture, if he were to move mountains"; to the last charged the Hebrews with believing in a God who "ate veal" with Abraham in a tavern, and who tried to kill Moses in a mountain pass. All literature would lose its bloom and its aroma, if subjected to such criticism as he passed on the Hebrew Scriptures. Serviceable no doubt it was in breaking down and destroying dogmatic beliefs, which had lost their fine poetical character, and become very dismal and cruel and oppressive as unintelligible prose; but it failed wholly to appreciate the poetic truth which once was in them, out of which they were born, and by force of which they lived so long as they lived to any purpose. Fine scholars would say that Mr. Parker's rationalism did immense injustice to the real character of the Oriental literature; no theologian will accept Mr. Parker's reading of his creed; and

many a "liberal," who dissents from the popular theology, in its dogmatic statements, as heartily as he did, cannot read his descriptions of it without a feeling bordering on resentment, that symbols, magnificent even in their extravagance, should be so abused. Spiritual things are not to be ethically discerned. The forms of ancient religions may be spiritual things to us no longer; that may be our fault, not theirs, and we cannot fairly deal with them as if it were theirs, not ours. To us who are reflective, critical, prosaic, moral, they may seem nonsensical or absurd. So, however, they did not seem to the people whose genius originated them; and the grand myths and legends of religion are true as their originators held them, not as we interpret them. To insist on trying them by our rigorous understanding, and then to discard them because they will not answer the questions of our common sense, is to miss the splendor of the antique genius, and it is to stigmatize the human mind for entertaining gross absurdities it never dreamed of. Realism is great in a realistic age; but one does not like to see the marks of Cromwellian halberds in a cathedral. Of course, Mr. Parker meant none of the injustice that he perpetrated; he had no thought of misconstruing Bible or creed; he would have cut off his right hand sooner than pen a line which he knew would misrepresent the actual and full sense of the Jewish writings, or the genuine intention of the Christian formularies. He did not write merely or mainly as a controversialist, or as a polemic; he sought the truth; he wrote and spoke under a deep persuasion of his responsibility to the Spirit of Truth; but he sought the truth with the powers of the practical understanding and the earnestness of the moral sense; and he wrote and spoke it with the directness of the Reformer,—as a realist, aiming to accomplish an immediate purpose, not as an idealist, who seeks for, is satisfied with, the manifestation of truth in Beauty. Mr. Parker was not an ethereal or celestial, but a human and terrestrial man; strong, healthful, racy, sweet, purifying the very atmosphere about him with his mental and moral cleanness, and shedding virtue from the very hem of his garment, but still a creature of nature, a child of telluric influences, and of course subject to the limitations of the telluric currents. There were moments

when, in the fierce whirl of his active life, he caught glimpses of high interior truths ; but he could not pause long enough to make them clear, fixed views, and the sweep of his practical tendency, the necessity of teaching multitudes of people the most indispensable truths of life, the demand that was made on him incessantly for plain, popular, and rhetorical statements which the uneducated could comprehend, carried him irresistibly away into the turbulent region of affairs.

In saying that Mr. Parker was not an idealist, a spiritualist, or a poet, but a sturdy and stubborn realist, we do not mean to detract in the least from his merit or his fame. His realism was of no common stamp. It was, as we have said, a realism of mind, heart, and conscience. It was not merely earthly, but human, we had almost said superhuman ; for some of its manifestations were so remarkable, that we regard them with a kind of awe, as indicating a prodigious elemental force. It seemed to give him an insight into the processes of history, and a feeling for the subtle, underground laws that control events, which may fairly be called prophetic, and which would in a less scientific age have given him the reputation of a seer. In 1856 he predicted explicitly that, in the event of Mr. Buchanan's election to the Presidency, the Union would be dissolved by civil war before the close of his term of office. He wrote this in June to Horace Mann ; in August, to Edward Desor ; in October, to John P. Hale ; in November, to Miss Hunt in Europe. It is not conjecture, it is prevision ; it is not guess, it is assertion. He acts on his prophecy with a sure instinct that things will come out according to his foretelling. "I have been preparing for civil war these six months past," he writes to Mr. Hale. "I buy no books except for pressing need. Last year I bought fifteen hundred dollars' worth. This year I shall not order two hundred dollars' worth. I may want the money for cannon." In November he has not orders out for fifty dollars' worth. On the evening of the election day he enters on his journal : "Of course we shall fight. I think affairs may come to such a pass that my own property may be confiscated, — for who knows that we shall beat at the beginning, — and I hung as a traitor ! So I invest property accordingly. Wife's will be safe." This prescience he owed to the depth and quickness of his sympha-

thy with the popular feeling. Living close to the ground, he heard the electric currents course through the grass; human in every atom and pulse of his being, he felt flowing through him the unconscious transmissions of energy, caught by instinct the secret drift of affairs, knew what the people purposed better than they knew it themselves, could read their thought in their stammering, could tell their direction from the working of their anatomy though they seemed to be moving towards another quarter, could trace the law that swayed their clumsy limbs and gathered their incoherent masses, and in their political action could note the footfalls of their fate. His illumination proceeded from his conscience, which, like that of the Hebrew prophets, never lost hold of the thread of the moral law that linked cause to effect, and from his heart, which could measure accurately the rising of the flood of popular indignation, and indicate the moment when the tide of wrath and shame and sorrow would fill the people's breast, and endurance would be possible no longer. The causes that hastened the crisis lay in the undeveloped tendencies of the masses, and no man knew those tendencies so well as he.

To this realism, on which we have dwelt so long and so emphatically, Mr. Parker owed his *common sense*. He was no visionary, no speculator or theorist in any department of thought. He could not be. The balance of his faculties forbade. No quality in him could dominate the rest, except it were the will, which could dominate them all. He was deliberate in weighing arguments, careful in estimating opinions, slow in coming to conclusions. He could not accept a position till all his powers had surveyed it in turn. He was an average Unitarian in the Divinity School; remembered that "nations are by the Divine permission visited with earthquakes and pestilences,—why may not the sword be employed for similar purposes?" as in the case of the Canaanites. His two sermons on the historical, scientific, and moral contradictions of the Bible he kept in his drawer a whole year before he judged it wise to preach them, and then he took counsel of his friends. In 1840, he had no doubt that Jesus Christ wrought miracles. In 1843, he had no philosophical objections to a miracle, in his definition of it, but only demanded more evidence than



for a common event. In 1845, he thinks miracles are entirely possible; thinks God can reveal himself in a thousand ways in which he never did reveal himself, and remands the whole question to the historical evidence. He went to the anti-Sabbath convention in 1848, feeling that he was "not a bit of a reactionist," that he was too radical for the conservatives, and too conservative for the radicals. We all know how he spoke about the Old Testament, but he always read a lesson from it on Sunday. "I love," he said, "to read the deep things of the Old Testament and New Testament. They are dear to me, because dear to my fathers, and precious to whole nations of men." He had an unbounded respect for the Associationists, but could not forbear his sly humor at their plans. He was an earnest and powerful and persistent preacher of Temperance; but the "Maine Law" seemed to him an invasion of private right. "Wine is a good thing; so is beer, rum, brandy, when rightly used. I believe it will be found on examination that, other things being equal, men in social life who use stimulants moderately live longer and have a sounder old age than teetotalers."

He bore mighty testimonies against war; never preached, he says, against the non-resistants; and yet "the wrathful emotions also are an integral part of humanity, and with both nations and individuals have an indispensable function to perform, which, in the present state of civilization, must sometimes be with violence, even with shedding aggressive blood." "All the great charters of humanity have been writ in blood, and must continue to be so for some centuries." He "knows nothing to justify the hypothesis of Spiritualism," is not successful in his investigations, drives off the "spirits" by looking at the table, gets any answer he wants, but he complains that scientific men give "Spiritualism" the go-by. His Sermons of the Perishing Classes, of Pauperism, and kindred topics, are among the most powerful that were ever delivered, and his interest in the poor was intense; but his charity never ran away with his judgment. "Our Society for the Prevention of Pauperism we are making a society for the promotion, diffusion, and organization of pauperism." The school at Westborough, he said, was a school for crime, and must

graduate villains; he was not quite sorry when it was burned down.

Slavery had no more vehement or persistent enemy than Mr. Parker. To the crusade against it he devoted the best years of his life. His abhorrence of it stirred his fiercest indignation and pointed his sharpest invective. His hatred of it made him more hated than even his heresy. The blows of his hammer on that old evil rung all over the land, and the gallows on which he hung its abettors and apologists might be seen from the White Hills to the Rocky Mountains. While Wendell Phillips drove the fine blade of the American principle to its heart, while Garrison confronted it with the majesty of the moral sentiment, Parker hurled at it everything that came in his way, — libraries of statistics, heaps of facts and figures, treatises on political economy, volumes of history and social philosophy, tons of sciences, — ethnology, anthropology, philology, physiology, comparative geography, — ethics, Old Testament and New Testament. He stabbed it, kicked it, spit on it, stamped on it, overwhelmed it with indignation and obloquy. But the lava stream of his moral conviction never scorched the plain of his common sense or withered the force of a single fact. He saw ugly things as they were, and could make allowances. He clung to Union and Constitution, and voted with the best party there was. He admitted that freedom was not always a pleasant thing to the blacks; and when they went back to bondage, he simply said, "We must bear as much from *this* untoward generation as Moses from his nation of slaves, who wanted to go back to Egypt." He felt great sympathy, he said, with slaveholders. He had no romance about the negro. "He is the least acquisitive of all men: he is an equatorial grasshopper." In voluptuousness "only the negro beats the Shemites." "The negro is slow, a loose-jointed sort of animal, a great child." Never was man so powerful and passionate, yet so temperate. Never did man have such hold of principles, and at the same time such perception of the limitations of their working. Never did man so bravely launch out on the deep sea of moral truth, or commit himself so entirely to the current of moral sentiment, all the while keeping the lead in his hand and noting

every change of the weather in his log-book. His star must always be hitched to a wagon. He always looked well to the string of his kite, and seemed to fear lest his airy principle would soar away out of sight and be lost, if it were not surely fastened to a well-planted fact. He relied greatly on history. His great arguments were historical arguments. His speeches and sermons often bristled with quotations from the census.

We do not under-estimate Mr. Parker's intellectual force when we say that it was inadequate to the task of holding in subjection these immense organic powers of his, of making each do its work, of extracting and combining their results, of reducing to philosophical theory and statement the vast material for thought they brought in. His will was proportionate to his other faculties ; it could gather them up and use them at its pleasure, could make them serve his moral purpose with perfect obedience. But his intellect failed in the effort to make them tributary to pure thought. Hence he was far less a philosopher than he was a man of affairs, and far less a theologian than he was a practical reformer of society. The huge masses of his knowledge and experience were never organized in a system, or made to revolve in beautiful order about some central thought. The treasures amassed by his acquisitive power, and stored in the several departments of his mind, lay in separate heaps. He was a sturdy Puritan of New England, laden with the erudition of a German professor ; but the Puritan could not absorb the professor, nor could the professor absorb the Puritan ; nor could the Puritan and the professor combine in a single human consciousness. The Yankee and the transcendentalist could not quite coalesce. The realist by nature and the idealist by culture could not cordially embrace. The elements of opposite systems seemed to be side by side in his mind, and now one and now another of them had a preponderance. Here you would say decidedly he was a Pantheist, immersing the whole universe in God ; there you would say with equal confidence that he was a Theist, separating the Maker in essence from his world. There are passages in which he speaks of the controlling influence of law, linking all events in a chain of destiny so closely woven that no room is left for an

independent thought or a volition along the whole line of human development ; and there are passages that speak of Providence, and the Divine care of the smallest things, with the tender unction of an old-fashioned Christian. His reason, sweeping off into broad generalizations, taking in with comprehensive glance the facts of organization, the forces of circumstance, the determining influences of age, climate, ancestry, parentage, material condition, social environment, notes the vital connections that hold past and present together, and the law of transmitted life that makes the experience of the past to be the destiny of the present, and, seeing everywhere the terribly exhaustive action of cause and effect, loses everything, even the human will itself, in the majestic movement of the One Supreme. He is inextricably involved in the meshes of the beautiful necessity, "The All is God." Presently his own titanic will asserts itself, and he believes in freedom, responsibility, individual care and power, and is ready to echo Luther's bold saying, that "God needs good men almost as much as good men need God." Allowing his intuitive sense of the absoluteness of the Divine Justice to exert its full effect on his judgment of the moral world, he seems at moments to admit no injustice as possible in any part of the universe ; he pleads that, if we knew all, we should see that all was good, was best, here and now ; that every living thing has its place and its deserts from moment to moment ; that God balances his books every instant so fairly, that, if the affairs of the world were wound up at a second's notice, no mite of injustice would remain, no claim would be unsatisfied, no want would be unfulfilled, no prayer would be unanswered. His doctrine of the Infinite and Absolute God would lead him to the magnificent optimism that sees a perfect world in every atom of matter. But he could not rest in such fine faith ; he could not hold his divine abstraction ; he saw the actual misery on the earth, he heard the groan and the sob ; his heart was wrung by the agony the creatures suffered, and with intense earnestness he maintained that, unless there were another life after this, when the evil should be punished and the suffering innocent be rewarded, there was no justice. He demanded an individual and conscious immortality for the horse that dropped dead in the

street under the blows of his brutal driver, and for the hare that was torn in pieces by the dogs. He made Justice an attribute of the Eternal, and then made time a condition of its display. He made Equity a quality of the Infinite, and then made the actual working of it depend on a change from one sphere to another. Had he been only a great, wholesome, human realist, he would have said nothing about the ideal justice of God; had he been only a fine intellectual transcendentalist, he would have said nothing about the disorders of Nature; but being both realist and transcendentalist, and being both strongly, he stated each side of the problem forcibly, and let the two grand contradictions stand side by side, with scarcely an attempt at reconciliation.

His philosophical method suffered from the same cause that left so defective his philosophical results. His projected work, his life's work as he designed it, on the Development of Religion, for which he collected such vast material, and laid out such a comprehensive scheme, was planned according to the modern historical method, which drops the study of metaphysics, and, instead of delving into the experiences of the individual consciousness, collects facts from the general development of mankind. Yet even his studies for this work, ample and admirable as they were, had a very seriously impaired value, from the fact that they were really conducted on a preconceived theory with a deliberate theological intent; and that this theory was not derived from a generalization of the facts in the history of the Development of Mankind, but from a reading of the supposed "facts of human consciousness." It has all the clearness, the positiveness, the dogmatic strength, of the old English method in theology, which argued from a few picked individuals, or took some single individual of marked characteristics as a representative, just as he was; of human nature, judged the experiences of the race by his experiences, their beliefs by his beliefs, their hopes by his hopes, their fundamental convictions by the results of his thinking and living. He could not get away from individuality; he could not give historical criticism its full sway; he could not yield himself without reserve to the scientific spirit. Like the son in the parable, he said, "I go, sir," and went not.

His theological scheme expressed simply the mental and moral facts of his nature. It was noble, for his nature was noble; it was rich and copious and varied, for his nature was rich and copious and varied; it was comprehensive and many-sided, for his nature was comprehensive and many-sided; it was earnest and glowing with vitality; it was lofty; it was tender and loving; for he was a terribly earnest man, he was full of vitality, his soul was lofty, his heart was tender and loving. Still it was at bottom the theology of an individual soul. And he suspected this himself.

Thus, in his "Experience as a Minister," he writes:—

"From the primitive facts of consciousness given by the power of instinctive intuition, I endeavored to deduce the true notion of God, of Justice and Futurity. Here I could draw from Human Nature, and not be hindered by the limitations of Human History; *but I know now, better than it was possible then, how difficult is this work, and how often the inquirer mistakes his own subjective imagination for a fact in the universe. It is for others to decide whether I have sometimes mistaken a little grain of brilliant dust in my telescope for a fixed star in heaven.*"

We think others will decide that he did here and there make this mistake,—a mistake free in his case from the mean and deplorable consequences which too often result from such an error; a mistake that in his case did indeed change a deal of brilliant dust into stars of faith and hope and charity; while a similar mistake in the case of a Calvin, for example, reduced by fire stars of faith and hope and charity to vanishing sparks in the embers of a martyr's stake. Mr. Parker's theology had the peculiarities and the limitations of his rugged personality. The experience out of which it grew was profound, but it was private. Here are his three grand postulates:—

1. The instinctive intuition of the Divine. The consciousness that there is a God.

2. The instinctive intuition of the Just and Right. The consciousness that there is a Moral Law which we ought to keep.

3. The instinctive intuition of the Immortal. A conscious-

ness that the essential element of Man, his Individuality, never dies.

The appeal to consciousness is of course an appeal to individual consciousness, for the collective consciousness of mankind has no expression ; nor can an individual be said strictly to be conscious of a being outside of himself, or of a condition of existence with which as yet he has no acquaintance. We are conscious of thoughts, feelings, sentiments, from which we may or may not infer the existence of a Deity, of a Moral Law, of an Immortal Life. Of those things themselves we are not conscious ; nor are all people conscious of the thoughts or the feelings which originate them. But Mr. Parker's personal consciousness was so active and strong, his thoughts were so palpable, his feelings so tangible, his sentiments so solid, there was so little break between his conception and the outward object corresponding therewith, that for him to be conscious of a want was to be conscious of the source of its supply ; to be conscious of an aspiration was to be conscious of a person to whom it was directed ; and to be conscious of a huge hunger for existence was to be conscious of the existence that should satisfy the hunger. Other people we can conceive of as being conscious of a devil or of fate, conscious of annihilation, conscious of the utter indifference of action. He had a soul to aspire ; he had a conscience to purpose righteously ; he had a hope to look endlessly forward for the perfection of his individuality. And yet this method of arriving at universal truths is illusive. The truths so discovered belong to a single great soul, and to those who accept that soul as normal in its development. Mr. Parker appealed to history as testifying to a universal consciousness consentaneous with his own. But this appeal was an afterthought, and was never strengthened by adequate inductions. In his "Experience as a Minister," where he passes his life and opinions under review, he says : —

"For these three great doctrines I have depended on no Church and no Scripture ; yet have I found things to serve me in all Scriptures and in every Church. I have sought my authority in the nature of Man, — *in facts of consciousness within me*, and facts of observation in the human world without. To me the material world and the outward history of Man do not supply a sufficient revelation of God, nor warrant

me to speak of Infinite Perfection. It is only from the nature of **Man**, from facts of intuition, that I gather this greatest of all truths as I find it in *my consciousness*, reflected back from Deity itself."

Mr. Parker, then, made his consciousness the test of human nature. We submit that he had no right to do so, for the experiences of men are infinitely varied, and the facts of consciousness vary with the experiences. Let us not be understood as casting any suspicion on the validity of the three great truths enunciated by Mr. Parker, or on the evidence he adduces for them. We believe them to be essentially truths of human nature, revealed in the human consciousness, and deriving their certitude from that revelation; but we believe that they are revealed, not to the universal consciousness of mankind, nor to the average consciousness of mankind in all generations, or in any single generation, but to the consciousness of the chosen souls of noble birth, unusual endowment, or rich experiences. They are truths to the great souls, not to the small ones; to the pure souls, not to the impure; to the earnest souls, not to the flippant or the mean; to the causing and creative souls, not to the inefficient and idle; to the souls that have great power of life, not to the souls which, having no root in principles, have none in immortality. As we grow in moral and spiritual stature, these great truths come to light in us; and the man who could appeal to his consciousness in demonstration of them, as Theodore Parker could and did, with such assurance and emphasis, has attained a moral and spiritual stature that is attainable by few in this life, and to the many is utterly inconceivable. Well may the multitude take the readings of his consciousness instead of their own. Wisely will they accept him as their prophet, and receive his declaration of what he knew as a prediction of what they shall know by and by. But they will do wisely also to remember, that the special form which these noble truths assumed to him was imparted by the shape of his very strong and peculiar personality. "As for my theology," he writes to his old teacher and friend, "it has grown out of *me* as unavoidably as my arm has grown with my body." Thus his Deity is an inference from himself, — a projection of his own image on the walls of the universe. It is a grand shadow.



"I have taught that God contains all possible and conceivable perfection, — the perfection of being, which is Self-subsistence, conditioned only by itself; the perfection of power, All-mightiness; of mind, All-knowingness; of conscience, All-righteousness; of affection, All-lovingness; and the perfection of that innermost element, which, in finite man, is personality, All-holiness, faithfulness to himself."

This rather mechanical formula recurs again and again, with endless iteration and reiteration, in sermon and book; it is the formula of a stout Anglo-Saxon mind, with healthy and balanced faculties working with perfect ease and satisfaction, and with no misgiving as to their scope or direction. So far the Theism is clear and definite. But, singularly enough, having asserted his intense realism in this robust way, he pushes it to an extreme of conscientiousness, and topples his Theism over into Pantheism again.

"I dare not attribute personality to God, lest I invest the Deity with the limitations of my own, ending in anthropomorphism; nor impersonality, lest I thus affix the limitations of mere matter, and abut in Hyllism or in Pantheism. Yet infinite self-consciousness must belong to God, only I can have no adequate conception of any consciousness but my own; so I know thus that I cannot know the mode of the consciousness of God. The consciousness that I ascribe to God must be as alien and as unlike as the bear of the strolling bear-tamers is to the constellation called the Bear in heaven."

This illustration, as Mr. Weiss reminds us, is from Spinoza the Pantheist. We will not criticise this passage with a view to showing its inconsistencies; we will not ask why the same thing that is said of God's self-consciousness might not be said of his all-knowingness, his all-righteousness, his all-lovingness; why, in fact, it might not be said of the whole conception of Deity, to the entire confusion of the theistic idea. We are quoting Mr. Parker's opinions with a purpose to illustrate the character of his mind, not with a purpose to discuss the opinions themselves. They show a profoundly practical, but not a finely speculative intelligence.

The personal character of his belief in immortality is even more striking.

"I have no more doubt of my eternal life," he says in a letter bearing date May 5, 1848, "eternally *conscious*, eternally progressive, than

of my present and mortal condition. Since I believe the entire *goodness* of God, I have no fear, no desire, to know more about the form of the next life, or rather of the next stage of this life. If I had only reason, which cares little about persons, and deals more with ideas, I should not think nor care, I suppose, about meeting my friends in the next stage of life; but as I have affections, more powerful too than reason, I cannot doubt that I shall see and know my friends in heaven. *Once I did not think so; but at the grave's mouth, as it closed on a sister, I could not doubt.* Where my logic had failed me, Nature came in and completed her work."

In another place he says: —

"I often find I can *feel* further than I can see, and accordingly I rest the great doctrines of Christianity, not on reasoning, but reason on intuition."

The sentiment may be excellent, but the philosophy is unsound. We remember with what tremendous effect the subjective argument from experience has been used to maintain the authority and the credit of the whole scheme of the vicarious atonement, and we cannot see that Mr. Parker's argument has any substantial advantage in point of strength over that of his adversaries. What the needs of the heart may be, it is perhaps impossible to say. It may be fed on spiced food so long that its appetite becomes perverted. It has been so often told and made to believe that it needed the unnatural, that it would die without the preternatural, and that the supernatural was its meat and drink, that it has perhaps forgotten what the natural is, and may possibly, when in a normal condition, be satisfied, if not with very much less than is commonly supposed, yet at least with what is very different from that which has been fancied to be indispensable to content its spiritual needs.

That this intense individuality of Mr. Parker, this stubborn realism, this positive, absolute, and persistent self-assertion, added immensely to his influence, cannot be questioned. Man-kind love strong personalities. They love strength of natural qualities. Dogmatism is always fascinating to weak and timid minds, who are thankful to be spared the pain of thinking for themselves. The prominence which Mr. Parker gave to his three elemental truths, the frequency with which he advanced

them, the emphasis with which he enunciated them, had an effect very similar to that of the Five Points of Calvinism, which once no sermon was complete without. The sharpness of their outline stamped them more deeply on the memory. The massiveness and rhetorical exuberance of their statement increased wonderfully their weight. Their very inconsistencies lent them vigor. They were not so much a theology as a heap of theologies, one for every species of man, — one for the moral, one for the intellectual, another for the affectional, and yet another for the spiritual. There seemed to be something in them for every soul to feed on, and each soul as it took what belonged to it was content with its portion, and asked not what others had.

Mr. Parker's popular method of exposition, his habit of applying his abstract ideas to concrete topics, and to the practical interests of life, helped also to give his views currency. At the bottom of every social reform, as he interpreted it, lay his philosophy. He carried dietetics back to his original principle. He seldom made a speech, however short, at an antislavery convention, or a woman's rights meeting, without a statement of his theology. Every matter that interested him with the public was an opening out of his religion and an opening into it, so that vast multitudes of people who were drawn to him at first by his humanities imbibed with them his divinity and became his converts. They saw that he was wholesome, and felt he must be true. Leaving orthodoxy because it was not philanthropic, they hailed "Parkerism" because it was. They were advocates of temperance ; so was he. They were friends of liberty ; so was he. They were champions of the social and civil rights of woman ; so was he. They were agitators for the deliverance of the slave ; so was he. They came to hear the powerful preacher of a very noble morality in private, domestic, social, and political life, behind every sermon. They saw the framework of his religious philosophy ; they did not comprehend it ; they could not in all respects agree with it ; they shook their heads at this or that heresy ; but after all, they said, the tree must be judged by its fruits, and the tree that produced such fruits as these could not be radically unsound. There must be love of God where there was so much love of

man ; and if there was the love of God, there must be something of the knowledge of him too, perhaps all the knowledge of him that was needed. They saw that nine tenths of his preaching was positive ; that the denial was only the reverse of his affirmation,—the “no” that was necessary to complete his “yes,”—the broken shell which the bursting truth must leave behind, the Bethany on which he must turn his back when he set his face towards Jerusalem. They bore him witness that he denied vehemently because he more vehemently asseverated, and that he put his denial out of the way the instant the force of the asseveration was felt. If he blotted out the morning star, he blotted it with the morning sunlight, which made stars unnecessary. His aim was to plant great truths. He could not, of course, even define the truths, without contrasting them with what he regarded as errors.

“I have broken up wild land,” he said, “and ploughed also anew the old, which was foul with weeds. No doubt I have sometimes crushed down a tender, useful herb ; but whenever I saw such before the coulter, I lifted my plough out of the ground, and spared a whole square yard of baneful weeds for one sweet flower they girt about with their poison ; nay, after the share had passed, I felt the furrow with my hands, to reserve some little herb of grace which might have been turned over in the general stirring of the ground.”

The vitality of Mr. Parker’s nature, indeed, forbade his being a denier. His capacity of belief was enormous. He extended to all literature the inspiration that Christendom limits to the Bible. He attributed to mankind in all ages the power of discerning and receiving spiritual truth which Christendom claims for the few as a special grace. He believed not in a single revelation, but in numberless revelations, in revelations numerous as are human souls. He believed in the inspiration, not of a few elect persons, but of all just men and true. He believed of human nature what Christendom believed only of the Christ. He believed that all rational beings had an inner witness of the Deity, whose name Christendom with much grammar and dictionary spelled out from a Greek text. He believed that all men were immortal by nature, and not by peculiar gift ; that the demonstration of their immortality was the stir of noble purposes and pure desires in

their hearts, not the stir of the dead body of Jesus in his stony grave; and that the promise of immortality was life and blessedness for all. He believed more in heaven than most Christians believe in heaven and hell both. He believed as much in God as others believed in God, Devil, and Nature combined. He believed so prodigiously in truth, that even error was, in his judgment, but an attempt to find it. He believed so exorbitantly in good, that evil was but the absence of it, or, better still, the raw material from which it was made. His belief in an immanent God left the believer in miracle in the position of one who enjoyed but the minimum of faith, and was afraid lest Biblical criticism should annihilate that, and exegesis render the world godless; and his belief in the Eternal Law made the sitters at Moses' feet look like a group of sceptics. Mankind love great believers, not great deniers. They loved him as they never loved, and never will love, a Voltaire, a Gibbon, or a Thomas Paine. He believed more than other men: believed where they doubted; believed where they feared; believed where they dared not speculate; believed where they had not courage to conjecture. He answered with assurance questions which they did not even venture to ask; and built homes for them from airy sentiments and dreams which they had sadly taken to be vapors exhaled from their tears. Multitudes by the strength of his belief expected to be dragged out of sorrow, desperation, shame, and sin. It attracted the afflicted to him in crowds; it made his study a confessional; it drew hands towards him from the great darkness, and brought letters full of prayer and gratitude from lands beyond the sea. The sunshine of it made the wicked smile, and shed a morning radiance over the hearts of the dwellers in the outer darkness. He was all belief. Not satisfied with cramming every atom of this world with the living verities of God, he claimed every hour of eternity and every inch of infinity for the Divine benignity, and was hardly satisfied with that. Nothing would make him a disbeliever in the moral laws of the world. No calamity, no suffering, no sorrow, no sin; not the degradation he pitied; not the furious passion he deplored; not the vice he condemned; not war with its frenzies; not slavery with its abominations; not barbarism with

its ages of blood ; not our civilization, with its frightful pitfalls for men and women ; not materialism, not atheism, whatever their form of manifestation ; not blasphemy or hypocrisy, — could daunt this man's faith in God and the soul, or shake his Christian optimism for an instant.

In estimating Mr. Parker's work and influence, we must distinguish between the eternal men who live aloof from actual affairs, devoting themselves to the elaboration of great principles, which are to serve as foundations for future art, society, faith, and the temporal men who live for their generation, spending themselves, body and mind, heart and soul, substance and accidents, in the immediate service of their fellow-creatures. To this last class Mr. Parker belonged. We say this in no temper of disparagement. Both classes are needed, and it is impossible to say which is needed most. Both have their greatness, and between the two kinds of greatness who would trust himself to choose ? Both have their satisfactions and their insufficiencies ; both have their ecstasy and their depression ; both have their sunshine and their midnight. The first have more serenity, the last more warmth ; the first a wider horizon, the last a more passionate life ; the first a stiller watch-tower, the last a richer existence. Men distantly admire, respect, worship the first ; they fervently love and gratefully embrace the last. Mr. Parker sometimes spoke of himself as being abused and hated. " No man in America since Adams and Jefferson has been so abused in public and private." Yes ; but no man in America has been so widely, so cordially, so devotedly loved ; and his lovers were ever on the increase. He lived in his generation, and his generation, on the whole, appreciated him and loved him. In his heart he knew and felt that it did. Its kindness was harder to bear than its scorn. There are those who regret that Mr. Parker allowed himself to be absorbed in special causes, to the postponement, and finally to the relinquishment, of the great purpose of his life as a scholar and a thinker ; that he should have sacrificed the instruction and the good of posterity to the demands of the hour. But we cannot think this a mistake, for we think it was inevitable ; we cannot regret it, for it was precisely what he was called by Providence to do. His powers all tended to the con-

crete and the practical, and they exhausted themselves in that. His work was done when he died. He had said all he had to say; he had done all he had to do. He had no system which years would have helped him to unfold and establish. His great work on the Development of Religion would have been interesting, learned, and attractive; but we doubt if it would have possessed a permanent scientific value, for it would have been written, after all, in defence of a doubtful thesis. It would have been a longer Sermon of Theism. To the positive school in philosophy, his method would have seemed loose, uncertain, and unscientific, because based on the illusive facts of individual experience, instead of the solid data of history. To the theological school, it would likewise have seemed loose, uncertain, and unscientific, because based on the illusive facts of consciousness, instead of the everlasting principles of spiritual truth divinely revealed. It would not have been inductive enough for Herbert Spencer, nor deductive enough for Mr. Mansell. It was not needed to meet the wants of this century; for as far as he could do this, he had already done it by the sermons and speeches which were scattered all over the land, each with a pretty large piece of his book in it; and other men will be raised up to meet the want of the century to come.

Theodore Parker was emphatically and pre-eminently a man for his time, a man for an emergency. His task was to construct a strong bridge, by which the multitude of men in this country could pass safely from the old intellectual and social epoch to the new. He built the bridge of the best material that lay within his reach. He built it sufficiently well. There was no lack of good timber. The stones were firmly set. The buttresses were sound. The people crowded over it, and that was enough. No matter if it is taken down now, and its rafters used in another structure of more strictly architectural proportions and form. He was the popular interpreter of the Higher Law in politics, ethics, philosophy, and religion. No other man, no ten men, no hundred men, perhaps, did so much to effect this grand work as he. He translated transcendentalism into common sense. He planted the old beliefs whose ground was giving way upon new foundations which were palpable to

all men, and effected the transfer of thousands from animalism to spiritualism without giving them more than a momentary jar. They found themselves on another shore before they knew it.

In the first place, he did an immense service in recovering, restoring, and in many instances creating faith in a living God. In all our Western States that faith was dying out. Materialism was spreading fearfully, under the influence of an all-absorbing practical life. Mental restlessness was fretting the old systems of belief away, and unsettling the bases of tradition. The principle of individuality, fostered by the necessary self-dependence of the people, and spreading wherever the people spread, was rapidly destroying authority, and crumbling the stones of the Church, in whose ruins the ancient faiths were buried. There was no high education to counteract the eagerness of the senses. The power of abstract speculation was greatly enfeebled; the habit of generalization was lost; respect for prescriptive opinions was gone. The old ideas of God were repudiated, and all things were adverse to the formation of new ones. At this juncture came in Theodore Parker with his rational Theism, and his appeal in its behalf to the understanding, the affections, and the conscience,—with his wealth of information, his faith in science, his hopeful humanity, all supporting it,—with his manly criticism and his childlike faith, his distinction between theology and religion,—and the fading sense of the Infinite and the Eternal revived in the bosoms of these reckless repudiators of the world's old beliefs. Here was a man who knew everything, who was brave enough to ask questions, who had answered more questions than they had asked, who criticised the Church, excommunicated pope and bishop, would have none of the creeds, said harder things about the popular religion than they had ever thought, was hated by churchman and minister, and yet believed in God,—in a conscious God,—in a God who made the world for a purpose, and guided it to an end, and kept it in his care,—a God he could love and pray to. Verily, here was something to think of; and men did think of it; they were blessed with a new belief, suited to their actual needs.

Mr. Parker did another great service to his generation in



restoring the belief in personal immortality. That belief, too, was fast declining over vast regions of our country, not in consequence of the spread of historical or philosophical scepticism, for that was unknown among our busy, industrial people, whose little reading-time was consumed by the newspaper or the light magazine; but in consequence of the absorbing character of material pursuits, and the necessity of fixing the attention exclusively on the affairs of the present life. People lost first their practical interest in another state of existence, and then their faith in it. Residents in the Western cities particularly, and visitors there, even transient lecturers and preachers, reported a prevailing disbelief in immortality, which was becoming more and more stolid every year. It had not yet reached the point at which a reaction towards another extreme became inevitable, as was seen later; "Spiritualism" had not set in with its indignant protest, and its crowd of spirits rending the veil and swarming over the border. The unbelief was unrelieved even by fanaticism; and many saw signs of recklessness, sadness, sensuality, creeping over the surface of society. Theodore Parker saw them more clearly, noted them more sorrowfully, dreaded them more heartily, than anybody. He was a great believer in personal immortality; there was none greater; we never saw one so great in his time. He not only had the belief, — he clung to it; not for himself alone, but for mankind. He was persuaded that civilized society would be impossible without it.

"There is a God of Infinite Perfection. The soul of each man is destined to Eternal Life. These are the two greatest truths which human consciousness as yet has ever entertained. They are the most important; and if the human treasures were to go to the ground and perish, all save what some few men grasped in their hands and fled off with, escaping from a new deluge I should clutch these two truths as the most priceless treasure which the human race had won, and journey off with them to pitch my tent anew, and with these treasures build up a fresh and glorious civilization. . . . . If I know that mankind will still survive with ever greatening faculties in some other life, directed by the same Infinite Mind and Conscience and Heart and Soul that made us first, and guides us in our heavenward march, — if I know that each beggar in the street, that every culprit in the jail, or out of it, or hauling men thither, has an immortal soul, and will go on greatening

and beautifying more and more, — then I shall take the highest qualities which I know or feel, and work with them ; and I shall feel that my personality is one of the permanent forces of the universe, and shall work with conscious dignity and loving awe.”

In this faith he labored. Sermon, prayer, lecture, funeral address, letter, conversational speech, made known everywhere, in public and in private places, the earnestness of his feeling. We have heard it from his lips in the hall of the lyceum. How many he converted to his opinion we cannot, of course, say ; but it was something for such a man to bear such a testimony ; it was more for him to appeal to the human heart in witness of its truth. He must, at all events, have deeply stirred the best affections and aspirations of men and women, and so have made this life infinitely richer, even if he made the next no more real. He must have made many conscious of the immortality of their souls. When he preached as scathingly as he did against the popular views of immortality, he did so in the interest of other views, which he thought would commend themselves more to the reason and the heart of his fellow-men. When he so ruthlessly plucked away its usual supports, he did so in order that he might lay broad foundations for it in human nature. His wish was that the great doctrine should stand, not that it should fall. There are letters in these volumes that prove the wish to have been not altogether vain. He did save some, and some who were well worth saving, from the disbelief in immortality. There is no published evidence that he awakened such disbelief in any.

One more palpable service it must be conceded that Mr. Parker rendered to religion in his day. He proved that what is loosely, popularly, and mistakenly called scepticism, unbelief, “infidelity,” is not of necessity irreligious ; that free-thinking is perfectly consistent with fervent piety ; that naturalism may be as warm, tender, glowing, as supernaturalism ; that a man may discard completely any and all systems of theology, and yet be a deeply devout man. He held knowledge and aspiration together, and he exhibited them both in full proportions. If any were chilled by his sermon, they were sure to be melted by his prayer. While his head was dealing audaciously with

the problems of the Infinite, his heart was always kneeling in the Infinite presence, or nestling like a little child in the Infinite bosom. Thus science and faith found in him a practical reconciliation, and that went further with men than a speculative reconciliation would have done, perhaps will ever do. His personal embrace held together the intellect of the modern world and the devoutness of the ancient world, the understanding of the West and the sentiment of the East, — held them together mechanically it may be, but held them, made them acquainted with each other, made them friendly against the time when a nobler and more comprehensive philosophy should make them friends in a vital bond of union. Theodore Parker did much to save a searching, critical, speculative, sceptical age from irreligion, to rescue an industrial age from materialism, a questioning age from the denial of the soul. Many will accuse him of having unsettled their faith in tradition, and set them adrift on the shoreless sea of speculation; more will bless him for having thrown them manfully back on their reason. Some will regret what they will call his show of piety, as giving an illusive attraction to opinions that ought to be detested. They would rather he had openly been a cold and heartless mocker, as they believe he at heart was. But many will thank him for revealing the perfect consistency of rationalism and worship, and for kindling their intellectualism into a flame of love.

Of Mr. Parker's work as a reformer in social ethics and institutions it is unnecessary to speak here or anywhere, for it is known by all men. Indeed, it is better known than anything else about him. Many, even now, hold him in no good repute for this work; but it will, by the multitude, be acknowledged as most valuable service. If the increase of the antislavery feeling is good, he merits praise, for he probably did more than any man to create that feeling in the West, and as much as any man to confirm and deepen and make it intelligent in the East. If there is anything noble in our struggle, he predicted it and helped to bring it on, and generated much of the spirit that makes it what it is becoming or has already become. Were he alive, he would throw into it his property, his endeavor, and his life, if needful, with as much devotion as any of its martyrs.

If the country reaches the Promised Land of liberty through its Red Sea, no spirit will rejoice more cordially than his. He carried into his struggle with slavery a large element of the extravagance and grotesqueness that he carried into all he undertook. His singular interest in the habits and dispositions of bears, which the letters betray, and which Mr. Weiss pleasantly alludes to, sprung from an ursine quality in his own nature, which often gave infinite amusement to his friends. It frolicked in his wit, it capered in his humorous mimicry, it gambolled in his discourses, and it exhibited its ungainly movements in many a grotesque public performance. There was something of this shaggy, ursine element in his moral sense. It shows its uncouth strength in those great handbills, which Mr. Weiss has preserved, advising the Bostonians of the advent of the kidnappers, in the ceremony at the marriage of William and Ellen Grafts, in the speeches during that fearful time of the Fugitive-Slave Bill. But he did love liberty cordially and profoundly, and he may fairly claim that something of rudeness be pardoned in him to the spirit of it. He was at heart a stern Puritan and Covenanter. He loved the early New-Englanders, and perpetuated their spirit; and it was not an amiable spirit, when dealing with human rights and wrongs. They, however, exercised this spirit in their own behoof. He exercised it in the cause of the miserable and the despised, who could render no return for his service, and did not know even that he was giving it.

Theodore Parker's forte was, after all, *character*, in the sense that Novalis gives it, of disciplined will. He had an immense personal energy; his opinions were but expressions of it; his convictions were but the moral weight of it; his deeds were but the practical movement of it. He put himself into every act; and that self was just what God made it. We are not concerned to vindicate him from the charge of possessing qualities which were indispensable to the work he was called to do. He was positive to the extreme of dogmatism, but dogmatism was necessary to his success; without it he would have been a scholar and a critic; he would not have been a reformer either in theology or in morals. He went about with a sharp and heavy axe on his shoulder; but there were trees at whose roots

it must be laid. We do not use Damascus blades to fell gnarled oaks. He wielded a terrible invective, but there were pachyderms whose thick hides took ordinary spear-thrusts without feeling a prick, and shed common bullets as if they were drops of rain. He sometimes confounded the evil man's motives with his deeds, and struck through the sin into the sinner's heart; but the dialectics which distinguish between acts and motives belong to the casuist, not to the prophet. Sin is a sinner; evil is not a mask, it is a man; and one may as well not exhibit it at all, if one does not exhibit it as thinking, purposing, planning, breathing vengeance and compassing ruin. The commonplace about hating the sin and loving the sinner is well enough, hypothetically; but if the love for the sinner finds utterance in speech, it will be very hard to make men believe in the hatred of the sin, still harder will it be to make them hate the sin. All that can be asked is, that *personal* hate towards the sinner shall not be mistaken for *moral* detestation of the sin; that abhorrence of the sin shall come first, and that the sinner shall suffer only on account of his implication in it. Now we aver, not only on the strength of his own reiterated and earnest private asseveration, but on the assurance of his most intimate friends, and as the result of long and close personal observation, that Theodore Parker carried no private malice or rancor into his battle with his direst foes; he fought to gratify no private passion; he bore no private ill-will or personal grudge; victory was not his victory; defeat was not his defeat; he could forgive any insult or wrong offered to himself; he could make reparation for any insult or wrong offered to another; the tear came as quickly to his eye when he found that he had done an injustice, as when he felt that he had suffered one. But he had one enemy, — Satan; and if the man whom Satan had possessed was killed by the sword-thrust aimed at Satan's heart, he was sorry, but he could not help it. The Archfiend must be reached, though the way to him was hewn through human heart and flesh. He loved not the sight or the smell of blood, but he could bear it. "I was born," he said once, in a tender note to a friend, — "I was born to thunder and lighten and break things down to the ground. It is no pleasure for me to do it. Think yourself happy, that you were

called to shed your sunlight and dew on men's hearts, to make the grass and the flowers grow there." Let us remember that his work brought him many a bitter sorrow, and caused him more tears than he caused. He was a sensitive man, and felt the reaction of his own blow. Men thought him tough; he was only too tender: they thought him overbearing in the assertion of his own opinions; but few men were ever more respectful of the conscientious opinions of others, or more careful not to infringe their liberty of thought and speech. Men thought him overweening in his self-esteem: he was indeed aware that he had great gifts and great opportunities and a great responsibility; but he was also aware that they were God's endowment, not his earning, and his heart was full of poignant humiliation at his failure to do justice to his commission. Was he arrogant? Nay, his friends found him exceedingly humble; he had a kneeling spirit in his closet. He claimed little from man or from God; he did not expect, apparently, to leave behind him a very long or deep memory. "I am only one little spirit of water running into the great ocean of humanity; and if I stop here, I shall not be at all missed there." "If it turns out that I can serve no more in this warfare, the cause will not suffer. Some one quite different from me, but better, will yet for the great principles of religious freedom take my place. Humanity is so rich in ability, that the man of greatest genius for the highest function is never missed by the race of men."

Theodore Parker probably fell into the usual mistake of supposing that his greatest work was his least, and that his least work was his greatest. He expected to be remembered where he will be forgotten, and to be forgotten where he will be remembered. As a thinker, philosopher, theologian, we anticipate for him no immortality. His works will constitute no permanent part of American literature; for, however rich and able, they were devoted to questions of the day, and to transient phases of thought. His winged words went directly to the hearts of living men and women. There they nestled, and there they will rear their broods of blithe and happy songsters. His theology will be superseded by a grander system, which, allowing as much to common sense, to sentiment, to the criti-

cal understanding, and to natural affection, will allow more to reason and imagination, and will more successfully reconcile nature and the supernatural, science and faith, philosophy and religion. His theology served its end as a stepping-stone to something better, and will presently be left behind. But the man Theodore Parker, as a moral force, as a character, as a noble human soul, will live, as such always do, and will be immortal, as such always are. He will live in his friends as a part, and the better part, of their life. He will live in their children and their children's children as an inherited power of principle. He will live in the moral sentiments he stimulated, in the moral causes he aided. He will live in the wiser laws of the future time which he aimed at introducing, in the worthier customs which he did his best to implant, and in the nobler institutions at whose foundations he worked with such manly and self-sacrificing energy. He will not be celebrated among the great masters of philosophy, or among the great authors of religion. His life will be hid; but it will be hid in the deep heart of humanity.

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- ART. II. — 1. *Lectures on the English Language*. By GEORGE P. MARSH. First Series. New York. 1862. Lecture XXII. *Orthoepical Change in English*.
2. *The Works of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, &c.* By RICHARD GRANT WHITE. Boston. 1861. Appendix: *Memorandums of English Pronunciation in the Elizabethan Era*.
3. *The English of Shakespeare illustrated in a Philological Commentary on his Julius Cæsar*. By GEORGE L. CRAIK. London. 1857.

It has come to pass that in our day we have two separate languages,—English spoken and English printed. The works of some of our authors were composed on paper; when they are read aloud, they sound almost like translations; they may not lack rhythm and euphony, but it is a rhythm and a euphony that the eye can see. Another class, on the other hand, among